

A RESOLUTION

14-431

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

May 7, 2002

To declare the sense of the Council with respect to the need to review the process for amending the District of Columbia Elements of the Comprehensive Plan, to review the format and content of the Comprehensive Plan, to explore ways to make the Comprehensive Plan more useful in providing an overall guide for the future development of the District, to make the Comprehensive Plan more known and useful to the citizens of the District, to support creation of a Comprehensive Plan Process Task Force to work with the Office of Planning to provide recommendations to the Mayor and the Council about improving the Comprehensive Plan, to reaffirm that the existing Comprehensive Plan is law that the Mayor is responsible under the Home Rule Charter for preparing and implementing on an ongoing basis, and to assure appropriate coordination between the Office of Planning and the National Capital Planning Commission.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "Comprehensive Plan Process Sense of the Council Resolution of 2002".

Sec. 2. Findings.

(a) The District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital ("Comprehensive Plan") were first adopted in 1984-85 and amended in 1989, 1994, and 1998. The current language calls for the Mayor to submit proposed legislation to amend the Comprehensive Plan not later than March 31, 2002, and subsequently not less frequently than once every 4 years, not later than March 31st of every fourth year. The Mayor has submitted proposed legislation to the Council, the "Comprehensive Plan Amendment Act of 2002" (Bill 14-602), which proposes to revise the date for submitting Comprehensive Plan amendments from not later than March 31, 2002, to not later than March 31, 2005. The submission of the proposed legislation is intended to fulfill the requirement under current law. The Council does not intend to take action on Bill 14-602 during this Council Period.

(b) The current amendment cycle raises two primary issues regarding (1) the organization and benefits of the process as currently constructed, and (2) the adequacy of the

Comprehensive Plan itself. With the major planning initiatives that have been undertaken by the Office of Planning, the Mayor has stated that it has not been possible to undertake the Comprehensive Plan amendment process in the current time frame.

(c) Instead of undertaking a rushed amendment process or simply delaying the process by a few months, the Mayor has proposed the initiation of a thorough and inclusive review of the current Comprehensive Plan process. The first step to implement this process would be to establish, by Mayor's Order, a Comprehensive Plan Process Task Force ("Task Force"), whose members would be appointed by the Mayor and Council Chairman to represent a broad cross-section of constituencies. This Task Force would be comprised of 25 to 30 members, small enough to be efficient but large enough to reflect a variety of interests and geographic areas of the District and to bring varied expertise to the discussions.

(d) The Task Force would be staffed by the Office of Planning, which intends to contract with a consulting firm with expertise in comprehensive planning to conduct the review and facilitate the group discussions. In addition, the national office of the American Planning Association ("APA") has been invited by the Office of Planning to conduct a peer review that would bring planning directors -- who have recently completed comprehensive planning processes in major cities -- to the District of Columbia. These APA peers would constitute an expert panel to make recommendations and provide advice.

(e) The issues, to be reviewed by the Task Force in conjunction with the Office of Planning, as part of the overall examination of how best to improve the Comprehensive Plan and the Comprehensive Planning process in the District of Columbia should include:

(1) Exploration of the price local jurisdictions may pay for lapses in planning policy and the advantages of having a Comprehensive Plan;

(2) The importance of planning policy embodied in a Comprehensive Plan within the decision-making machinery of the District government, including its agencies and commissions;

(3) How long-range capital budget and other District government financial resources, which are annually updated, should be reflected in Comprehensive Plan-related documents;

(4) Alternatives for improving planning processes, including the study of alternative planning mechanisms, to be done objectively and without pre-determined outcomes;

(5) The best practices of comprehensive planning processes, entities, and documents in surrounding jurisdictions, in other cities throughout the United States, and in other national capitals;

(6) Clarification of the relationship between the Comprehensive Plan and other District planning undertakings, including those undertaken by the Department of Transportation and the National Capital Revitalization Corporation;

(7) The District's capabilities with its geographic information system and related systems for facilitating planning and implementation;

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(8) The problems inherent in the current Comprehensive Plan and planning process which could be addressed in a revised Comprehensive Plan and planning process; and

(9) The revised format and content of the Federal elements and determine whether any similar or compatible revisions should be made in the District elements.

(f) The Mayor has stated that the Office of Planning would prepare a report reflecting the work and recommendations of the Task Force, the consultant, the APA peers, and District government staff. The report would be submitted to the Mayor and the Council not later than February 2003.

Sec. 3. It is the sense of the Council to concur with the Mayor's proposal, set forth in his March 13, 2002, letter transmitting the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Act of 2002, to establish a Task Force to review the process for amending the Comprehensive Plan and to recommend improvements to the process, format, content, and usefulness of the Comprehensive Plan.

Sec. 4. The Council reaffirms that:

(1) The current version of the Comprehensive Plan is law, and that its implementation should be an ongoing major focus of the Office of Planning. In this regard, the statutorily required but overdue progress report on implementing the land use policies of the existing Comprehensive Plan should be submitted by the Mayor to the Council as quickly as possible. In addition, regardless of changes that may be recommended by the Task Force on the future format and process for amending the Comprehensive Plan, the Office of Planning should initiate, as soon as possible, some of the basic groundwork that will be required for any future update or reformulation of the Comprehensive Plan.

(2) Preparation and implementation of the District elements of the Comprehensive Plan is a responsibility under the Home Rule Charter that is given to the Mayor. Accordingly, sufficient resources should be allocated in a functioning Office of Planning to carry out this ongoing Comprehensive Plan responsibility adequately and to implement the Comprehensive Plan.

(3) Because the District and Federal portions of the Comprehensive Plan together comprise one Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, because the National Capital Planning Commission ("NCPC") is in the process of revising the format and content of the Federal elements of the Comprehensive Plan, and because NCPC has statutory authority to review and comment upon amendments to the District elements of the Comprehensive Plan, NCPC should be represented on the Comprehensive Planning Task Force.

Sec. 5. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of publication in the District of Columbia Register.